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Testimony in Support of SB 686 – PFAS Chemicals: Product Phase Outs and Registration Requirements

Before the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 24, 2026

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 686. I write on behalf of Potomac Riverkeeper Network (PRKN), where we work across Maryland and the greater Potomac watershed to protect clean water, public health, and the communities that depend on both.

SB 686 represents one of the most important and effective actions Maryland can take to address PFAS contamination: stopping it at its source.

PFAS Are a Persistent and Escalating Threat

PFAS are a class of thousands of synthetic chemicals designed to resist heat, oil, and water—and to persist indefinitely in the environment. As a result, they accumulate in our rivers, drinking water, soils, wildlife, and in our bodies.

The science is clear. Exposure to PFAS is linked to cancer, immune suppression, endocrine disruption, and developmental harm. These risks are compounded by the fact that PFAS contamination is now widespread across Maryland, including in drinking water supplies and surface waters throughout the Potomac watershed.

This is not a legacy problem alone—it is an ongoing and preventable source of pollution.

PFAS in Consumer Products Is the Root of the Problem

PFAS contamination is not accidental. It is the direct result of intentional use of these chemicals in everyday consumer products, often for convenience rather than necessity.

PFAS are added to cookware, cosmetics, textiles, food packaging, and cleaning products—items that are used daily and disposed of routinely. From there:

- PFAS enter wastewater systems through normal use
- They pass through treatment largely unchanged



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- They accumulate in biosolids and waterways
- They cycle back into farmland, drinking water, and the food system

This is a continuous, human-created contamination loop.

At PRKN, we are documenting these impacts through PFAS sampling, biosolids permit review, and direct engagement with farmers and communities. Once PFAS enter this system, they are extraordinarily difficult—and often impossible—to remove.

SB 686 Establishes Long-Overdue Accountability at the Source

For too long, the burden of PFAS contamination has fallen on communities, farmers, utilities, and taxpayers—while manufacturers continue to introduce these chemicals into commerce with limited transparency or responsibility.

SB 686 begins to correct that imbalance.

By phasing out intentionally added PFAS in consumer products and requiring disclosure and registration, this bill:

- Places responsibility where it belongs—with producers introducing PFAS into the market
- Reduces preventable pollution before it occurs
- Provides regulators and the public with critical information about PFAS use
- Creates a clear pathway to eliminate non-essential uses

This is not just an environmental protection measure—it is a matter of fairness and accountability.

We Cannot Regulate Our Way Out of a Growing Problem Without Turning Off the Tap

Maryland is also considering policies, such as SB 719, that address PFAS once it has already entered the waste stream—particularly through biosolids applied to farmland. Those efforts are necessary, but they are inherently limited.

PFAS are extremely difficult to remove with existing treatment technologies. As long as these chemicals continue to enter the system, downstream solutions will remain costly, complex, and incomplete.

SB 686 is the policy that changes that equation.

- It reduces the volume of PFAS entering wastewater systems
- It lessens long-term burdens on farmers, communities, and ratepayers
- It makes other PFAS policies more effective and more achievable

Without SB 686, Maryland will be forced to manage an ever-growing contamination problem. With it, we can begin to reduce that burden over time.

The Costs Are Already Being Shifted to the Public

The consequences of inaction are not abstract:

- Farmers are discovering contamination in soil and livestock
- Watermen are facing degraded fisheries
- Communities are paying for drinking water treatment
- Public agencies are absorbing monitoring and cleanup costs

These are the real and growing costs of allowing PFAS use to continue unchecked in consumer products.

SB 686 ensures that Maryland is no longer passively accepting this cost-shifting dynamic.

A Practical and Measured Approach

SB 686 is structured to be both effective and workable:

- It targets product categories where PFAS use is largely non-essential
- It phases in requirements over time
- It allows for clearly defined “currently unavoidable uses”
- It establishes a fund to support monitoring, response, and remediation

This is a targeted transition, not a disruption—and one that is already underway in other states and industries.

Conclusion

The PFAS crisis is the result of decades of avoidable decisions. Maryland now has the opportunity to make a different one.

SB 686 addresses PFAS where it begins—at the point of production and use.

It reduces future contamination, restores accountability, and protects communities across the state.

On behalf of Potomac Riverkeeper Network, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 686.

Thank you for your consideration and your leadership on this critical issue.

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